

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2560

C O N F I D E N T I A L TRIPOLI 1120

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, ENRG

SUBJECT: OCCIDENTAL DISPUTE WITH LIBYA

REF: STATE 235751 AND 235755

1. TODAY BEING FRIDAY, AND THE EVE OF THE END OF RAMADAN HOLIDAY, WE HAVE SO FAR BEEN UNABLE TO ROUSE ANYONE AT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY TO MAKE REQUEST FOR CLARIFICATIONS PER STATE 235751. WILL KEEP TRYING, BUT PROSPECTS ARE NOT GOOD UNTIL TOMORROW.

2. YESTERDAY, OCTOBER 2, CHARGE TELEPHONED LIBYAN CHAIRMAN OF OASIS, AND SINGLE MOST INFLUENTIAL LIBYAN EXPERT ON PETROLEUM MATTERS, OMAR MUNTASSIR, WHO WILL PROBABLY BE MEMBER OF LARG DELEGATION AT TALKS WITH OXY IN NEW YORK ON OCTOBER 8. CHARGE TOLD MUNTASSIR THAT PROHIBITION ON DEPARTURE OF NON-LIBYAN OXY EMPLOYEES WAS HIGHLY UNFORTUNATE DECISION, IN OUR VIEW, AND THAT IT WAS UNFAIR TO MAKE INDIVIDUALS SUFFER AS A RESULT OF THE LARG'S DISPUTE WITH OXY. MUNTASSIR OFFERED NO COMMENTS, BUT WE BELIEVE THAT AS PRACTICAL MATTER HE IS LIKELY TO BE MORE EFFECTIVE IN GETTING PROHIBITION LIFTED THAN IS FOREIGN MINISTRY.

3. WE ARE CONCERNED THAT DEPARTMENT UNDERSTAND
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THAT THERE APPEARS TO BE CONSIDERABLE DIFFERENCE

BETWEEN ATTITUDE OF OXY OFFICIALS HERE AND THAT WHICH IS APPARENTLY BEING TAKEN BY OFFICIALS IN U.S. TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, IT IS NOT, REPEAT NOT, TRUE THAT OXY HAS INSTRUCTED ITS LIBYAN SUBSIDIARY TO PROCEED WITH DEPARTURE OF ALL FOREIGN NATIONALS EMPLOYED IN LIBYA. ON THE CONTRARY, THE COMPANY HAS SENT A MEMO TO ITS NON-LIBYAN EMPLOYEES ASKING THEM NOT TO TRY TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY. IMPLICATION OF DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN'S REMARKS (STATE 235927) THAT OXY EMPLOYEES HAVE BEEN TRYING TO GET OUT EN MASSE BUT HAVE BEEN PREVENTED FROM DOING SO BY LARG, IS NOT ACCURATE, AND COMPANY OFFICIALS IN U.S. APPEAR TO BE PAINTING A MORE ALARMIST PICTURE OF THE SITUATION THAN FACTS HERE WARRANT.

4. IN OTHER RESPECTS OXY PRESS RELEASE PARALLELS DESCRIPTION OF DISPUTE COMPANY OFFICIALS HERE HAVE GIVEN UP.

5. DEPARTMENT SHOULD ALSO KNOW THAT LIBYANS DID NOT ASK TO SEND A DELEGATION TO NEW YORK, BUT PICKED UP AN OXY REQUEST THAT THEY DO SO, MUCH TO THE SURPRISE OF OXY OFFICIALS HERE. THEY UNDERSTAND THAT THE DELEGATION WILL BE COMPOSED OF SENIOR LIBYAN OFFICIALS, INCLUDING MUNTASSIR, WITH DR. HAMMER ON OXY SIDE. THE TOPIC UNDER DISCUSSION WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY BE A 100 PER CENT NATIONALIZATION OF OXY BY LARG, WITH POSSIBILITY OF A FOLLOW-ON SERVICE CONTRACT FOR COMPANY.
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